



## EU-Elections – A crucial moment

*In the face of the growing strength of rightwing anti-european parties; the coming elections to the European Parliament are of special importance. AEFJN has always fought against harmful EU economic and trade policies. This does not diminish its enormous positive achievements.*

### ACHIEVEMENTS OF THE EU

Much of what we value in everyday life we owe to united Europe..

**70 years of peace:** The EU has contributed significantly to reconciliation and peace between the peoples of Europe.

**A common currency:** 340 million Europeans in 19 countries can use a common currency.

**Freedom of movement:** Within the 24 states of the Schengen area people can travel without border controls.

**A common market** of goods, services, labour and capital makes Europe the largest free trade area in the world.

**Prosperity:** In spite of great inequality between and among the EU member states, prosperity has risen.

**Common standards:** In many areas, uniform standards facilitate economic development and daily living.

**Solidarity:** With one third of the budget, the EU supports poorer regions affected by structural change and countless community projects.

**Common agricultural policy:** 40% of the EU budget flow into agricultural and rural development to ensure the livelihood of farmers and the food supply of the population. Other aspects like export of subsidized food are highly controversial and in need of reform.

**Consumer protection:** The EU has done much to protect consumer rights and prevented abuse monopolies that dominate the market.

**Human rights:** The EU has done much to strengthen human rights in its Member States, although a consistent implementation of human rights still leaves much to be desired.

**Environment:** Although they are not always put into practise, EU regulations have contributed much to improve climate protection and establish common environmental standards.

### PARTY PROGRAMMES

In the European Parliament (EP), national parties are organized into several party groups, depending on their political direction.

Africa-Europe Faith and Justice Network (AEFJN) is particularly interested in the position of parties on development and trade policies that have an effect on Africa. Many parties say nothing very concrete, remain rather vague and see development cooperation as a tool to fight the causes of migration

Here are some positions of the parties in key words:

**EPP (European People's Party)** wants a fair development cooperation and is committed to implementing the Marshall Plan for Africa. It favours private Investments and trade agreements.

**PES (Social Democrats)** is committed to fair, agricultural and fisheries policies and to reshape world trade according to social and ecological goals. It wants to implement at last the target to devote 0.7% of BIP to development cooperation.

**EGP (Green)** in its comprehensive and detailed programme makes concrete proposals for an ecological and fair trade policy and calls for a change to an ecological agriculture. It advocates a genuine partnership with Africa and sustainable economic development through socio-ecological investments.

**ALDE (Liberals)** want a coherent development cooperation in line with the UN Sustainable Development Goals, with a focus on the rule of law, good governance and a social market economy.

**GUE/NLG (Leftist)** favours a reorientation of development cooperation which would involve replacing existing trade agreements and transferring responsibility for trade policies to the EU Parliament.

**AECR (Right wing)** would take development policy back exclusively to the national level. It favours a greater opening of EU markets to goods and services of developing countries and an end to the export of subsidized products.

### IMPORTANCE OF THE 2019 ELECTIONS

The danger is that anti-European forces will become so powerful that they are able to hinder and possibly block the work of the European Parliament. Therefore, it is urgent to mobilize the democratic forces in all European countries and encourage all citizens to vote.

***Cooperation among the countries of Europe is vital for our future. We must not leave Europe to those who want to destroy it...The European elections on May 26, 2019 is a crucial election. We all have to take responsibility and decide together what kind of Europe we want to live in.***

Diocesan Lay Council, Diocese of Limburg/Germany